

WASHINGTON D.C. — Washington, DC – Today, Congressman Walz again urged the Obama Administration and the U.S. Senate to move forward with crafting a new Surface Transportation Bill to ensure public safety, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth. Last week, the US House passed a three-month extension of the current transportation law in order to allow more time to craft a modern transportation policy.

“Hard-working families and businesses across southern Minnesota know that rebuilding our crumbling public infrastructure and creating a modern, safer transportation system is important for long-term economic growth,” said Walz. “The President and Congress should move forward now with crafting a new transportation bill not just continue the status quo, business-as-usual approach.”

“A robust, forward - thinking transportation bill is vitally important to ensuring that our businesses are able to compete in the global economy,” said Brad Meier, President of the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce. “We need a transportation bill that invests in the future, enhances mobility and safety on our roadways and spurs economic development in southern Minnesota and across the country.”

“A new transportation policy bill is critical to helping get our construction workers back to work. With unemployment in the construction trades running in excess of 30 to 40 percent we can no longer count on the broken Highway Trust Fund system,” said Wes Urevig, President of the Southeastern Minnesota Construction Building and Construction Trades. “Many of these construction workers have been without a job for over a year already. It's time we get these highly trained workers back on the job.”

Walz noted that this legislation would give southern Minnesota a chance to complete important local projects.

“I strongly believe that it is my duty to fight for funding for high-quality, local projects like expanding Highway 14 to make it safer, extending 55th Street in Rochester to ease traffic flow and encourage development and upgrade Highway 60 to improve mobility in southwestern Minnesota,” said Walz. “This bill is our opportunity to move those projects forward, expanding economic opportunity for local business, putting Minnesotans back to work and improving safety for those who use the roads.”

In June, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood asked Members of Congress to postpone the overhaul of our nation's transportation policies and systems and solely extend the current law for eighteen months. Walz and Transportation & Infrastructure Chairman Jim Oberstar rejected the Administration's 18-month extension of current transportation law because it will leave states without certainty and reliable funding source that they need to plan, design and construct significant multi-year highway and transit projects. This slowdown will offset much of the benefit of the increases transportation investment provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

At that time, Walz, along with his colleagues on the House Transportation & Infrastructure

Committee sent a letter to President Obama in June urging him to support a reauthorization bill this year.